

Press Release

HARFORD COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Department of Community Services



PUBLIC SAFETY

"Ensuring a Safe
Harford"

EDUCATION

"Preparing Now,
Building for the Future"

EFFICIENCY IN GOVERNMENT

"Governing Smarter"

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

"Growing and Sustaining
Harford's Prosperity"

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

"Protecting Our
Environment"

QUALITY LIVING

"Safeguarding What is
Important to Harford
County Citizens"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 20, 2012

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Harford's 'Ready By 21' Action Plan Receives Praise

(Bel Air, MD) - - SparkAction, an online journalism and advocacy center sponsored by The Forum For Youth Investment, recently published a case study detailing the accomplishments of the Harford County *Ready by 21* Task Force and Action Plan.

The county's *Ready by 21* Action Plan was compiled after a six-month process of gathering and centralizing information about young people and the opportunities available to them through data collection and community meetings.

In March 2010, the Maryland *Ready by 21* Action Plan was rolled out statewide, created by a collaboration of state leaders who used *Ready by 21* strategies to forge new ways of providing services and support to youth. The plan identifies objectives and benchmarks to be achieved through 53 action steps focusing on education, employment, health and housing. Harford County is one of several counties using the plan to drive change.

The Harford County Local Management Board created a Harford County *Ready by 21* Task Force with 87 members from 44 organizations. The task force compared the county's efforts to the goals and action steps in the state plan. The Local Management Board is a program within the Harford County Department of Community Services that brings together child-serving agencies to organize services and ensure that support is available to help families raise healthy, successful children from birth to young adulthood.

The case study states that Harford's *Ready by 21* Action Plan is "an excellent example of how a community can pull together data to tell a compelling, big-picture story across agencies and outcomes. The plan reviews the county's strengths, where it needs to improve, the barriers to progress and ideas to move forward."

(more)

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The plan outlines two types of actions: those that put into place recommendations from the statewide plan and those that address issues specific to Harford County. Local recommendations include:

- Developing a better communications plan between the community college and public schools about the variety of opportunities available;
- Using “system navigators” to support homeless youth and families and to access community resources; and,
- Developing creative employment opportunities for service providers of youth with disabilities to engage employers.

County Executive David R. Craig stated that task force and action plan “led to better information sharing, new partnerships and enhanced programming.” He added, “The action plan puts into practice what we all know, which is that development doesn’t stop when the school bell rings.”

“We recognize the importance of being able to support the education, employment, health and housing needs of more than 67,000 youth who live in Harford County as they transition to young adulthood. Thanks to the participation and input of over 100 community members, agency representatives, and youth, the report offers tangible suggestions on how we can collectively improve efforts and ensure that all of Harford County’s youth are ready for college, work, and life.”

To read the case study on Harford County, visit <http://www.readyby21.org/case-studies/readynaps-harford-county-md>. To download the Harford County *Ready by 21* Action Plan, visit <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/Services/LMB/Documents/392.pdf>. *Ready by 21* is a registered trademark of the Forum for Youth Investment.